



ONGOING

Guidelines to Support the Cultivation of Trust

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Activity Rationale and Aims

Aims

01. Critically consider activities and principles that can support the development of trust.

Rationale

Participatory research brings together people from different social positions and lived experiences. It is imperative that these collaborations are premised on trusting relationships so as to build collaborations and designs that support the wellbeing of all collaborators and generate processes that enhance the collective work. However, making visible the work of establishing and maintaining trust is difficult. These guidelines are meant to help collaborators consider dimensions of activity that can support the development of trust. These guidelines are not meant to be prescriptive, comprehensive, linear, or discrete. Developing trust is an ongoing process that is culturally, historically, and politically situated.

Activity Summary

Mutual trust involves grounding research and design in authentic relationships. Building trusting relationships involves centering interpersonal relationships to accomplish shared goals and join in mutual understanding, care, and solidarity (Vakil et al., 2016). The guidelines articulated below are categorized into 6 domains: (1) develop dignity-affirming agreements (2) prioritize relationship before and through task, (3) commit to transparency in data collection, (4) ensure reciprocity, (5) take action and build solidarity, (6) identify and heal distrust. These guidelines are intended as a starting place for reflection on how teams will foster and nurture trust. They are neither comprehensive nor linear.



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GUIDELINES

1. Develop dignity affirming agreements (See [Create Shared Agreements](#))
 - a. Acknowledge and leverage all collaborators' forms of expertise, including emotional and relational expertise.
 - b. Establish clear roles that invite and extend all collaborators' ways of knowing and being.
2. Prioritize relationship before and through task
 - a. Make space for authentic and engaged listening (see [Reflective Listening and Values Surfacing](#)). Engage in off the record listening, where audio and video recorders are turned off and notepads are put away (see Teeters & Jurow, 2018).
 - b. Establish check-ins, where time is dedicated to inquiring about and listening to the wellbeing of others, as a routine part of collaborative work.
3. Commit to transparency of data collection and analysis
 - a. Take a critical view on the methodologies, theories, and literature being used.
 - b. Get on-going consent for data collection- not just at the beginning of research activity.
 - If engaged in activity that is under an IRB protocol, this may mean revisiting the consent form and reminding participants of the option to withdraw at any point.
 - Share transcripts and ask collaborators if they still agree to the recordings being used.
- c. Discuss plans and processes of analysis (e.g. coding schemes and variables)
 - If collaborators are interested, code data together.
- d. When data has been analyzed, ask collaborators if the findings are presented in ways that honor their experiences and those of their community.
4. Ensure reciprocity
 - a. Develop standards of collaboration where the aims are grounded in the needs, desires, dreams, and visions of all collaborators.
 - b. Have explicit conversations about how collaborators envision reciprocal relationships being enacted (see Zavala et al., 2014).
 - For example, clearly define roles, articulate what each collaborator and/or entity is contributing and receiving, articulate explicit and implicit expectations, outline time commitments and constraints, develop shared and unique goals that will be accomplished.
5. Take action and build solidarity
 - a. Action can take multiple forms. In some collaborations, action may consist of engaged listening and dialogue, while in others, action is indicated by policy change or the completion of concrete deliverables. It is important that all collaborators agree on the value and nature of the defined action.
 - b. Start to build solidarity by making explicit commitments to equity and anti-racism (see Vakil et al., 2016). Identify the common and divergent identities and the politicized and racialized power dynamics between groups.



GUIDELINES

6. Identify and heal distrust

- a. In building trust, it is important to also identify distrust (Schultz, 2019).
 - For example, a community group may have had previous experiences with university researchers that resulted in distrust.
 - Engage in individual reflection on one's own positionality and role within the team.
- b. Work to heal distrust via honoring the dignity of collaborators (Schultz, 2019). This can happen via recognizing their funds of knowledge—knowledge based in cultural and historical practices (see Gonzalez et al., 2005)—and community cultural wealth—forms of capital nurtured by socially marginalized communities, including aspirational, navigational, social, linguistic, familial, and resistant capital (see Yosso, 2005).



Example from the field

This is an example of guideline number 6, “Identify and heal distrust.” In a collaboration among high school students, university researchers, and district personnel, collaborators had the shared goal of enhancing school culture to build trust and belonging. However, to build trust, many students acknowledged that they first needed to share their experiences of distrust, so as to heal those experiences and use them in the process of envisioning and enacting schools

of trust and belonging. To do so, students engaged in multimodal testimonio- the use of photography and oral and written narration to tell their stories. Stories included experiences of trust and distrust. Students identified the process of being able to openly acknowledge both experiences of distrust and trust as healing. They identified themes in their stories and used them to then envision and enact a plan for schools characterized by trust (see Trejo et al 2022).

Commitments to Equity and Wellness

Vakil et al. (2016, p. 199) discuss the role of developing trust that explicitly attends to dimensions of collaborators of identity and their histories:

“Establishing trust with community partners, especially in communities that serve students from non-dominant groups, requires not only a personal working relationship but also a political or racial solidarity. This is particularly urgent given the historical tensions that exist between communities of color and university-based researchers (Bridges, 2001; Minkler, 2004; Sullivan et al., 2001), as well as the current climate of high-stakes testing and monitoring that is prevalent in urban school districts (Lipman, 2004). Therefore, we argue that neither trust nor solidarity is gained (nor should it be) by the assertion of good intentions, nor is it accomplished merely once and then set aside. Instead, politicized trust calls for ongoing building and cultivation of mutual trust and racial solidarity.”

Drawing on the notion of a politicized trust defined by Vakil and colleagues in the above passage, we argue that the guidelines above support an explicit commitment to equity that is on-going and relational. Building trust via dignity affirming processes, attention to relationships, transparency, reciprocity, action and solidarity, and healing of distrust support collaborative processes that are not only oriented towards equity but also that have the potential to invite collaborators into spaces that support them to thrive within the context of the collaboration.



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Additional Reading

Shotton, H. J., Tachine, A. R., Nelson, C. A., Minthorn, R. Z. S., & Waterman, S. J. (2018). Living our research through Indigenous scholar sisterhood practices. *Qualitative Inquiry*, 24(9), 636-645.

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